

by a tramp in a ditch, simply for the sake of
 their language
 and their imagery. Ruskin was enraged to
 find it already
 happening to him in his own lifetime—:he
 thundered of
 social injustice, and people applauded his
 style. It hap-
 pened, too, long before he died, to D. H.
 Lawrence. So
 with Langland. We can still quicken with
 enjoyment at
 the homespun vividness of the comparisons
 in his pages,
 not unlike the rustic wit of Hardy's
 peasants or of
 Synge's—'wroth as the wynde'; 'hende
 (courteous) as
 houndeis inkychyne'; 'naked as anedle'; or,
 of a woman,
 'comune as die cart-wey'; or again, of her
 opposite,
 'chaste as a childe • that in cherche
 wepeth'; or again
 when, in a rare moment, the poet himself
 grows 'fayne
 (glad) as foule of faire morwe'. And there is
 a curious
 lyric lilt at moments about his lumbering,
 shaggy metre,
 as indiathalf-

regretful picture of his own abandoned youth:

Conat piscencia carnis • colled (clasped) me aboute
 the nekke,

And seyde, 'Thou art yonge and yepe (strong) • and
 hast y cresynowe

Forto lyve longe • and ladyes to lovy*.

Yet he can never be depended on; it would
 be appalling

to think that poetry can contain two lines
 more hideous

in their gobbling cacophony, as of a bad cold
 in the head,

than these from the Parable of the Talents:

And binam hym (took from him) his mnam (Mina,
 Greek coin) •—

for he ne wolde worche,

And yaf that mnam to hym • that ten mnames
 hadde.

Taken as a whole, with its drab monotony
 of manner,
 matter, and metre (of which brief

quotations can give
little conception), his work seems at times
like a vast
undulating desert through which the reader
toils from
dusty dune to dune, like a Crusader
struggling on in
pursuit of a mirage and a Sepulchre, by the
shores of a
Dead Sea, Yet there are instants when this
dreamer stops
searching his heart for sin and repentance
to look up at
the world about him, and suddenly we
see again the